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A FROLIC IN MEXICO

BREAKING THE PINATA DURING THE CHRISTMAS FESTIVAL.

This Mirth Provoking Pastime is the Great Social and Fun Making Feature of the Season—Dressing and Filling the Olla.

Christmas in Mexico is not the typical Christmas of cold and snow and ice, but one of bright, warm sunshine, cloudless blue skies, flowers in profusion, trees in full foliage and a life of out of doors.

At least a week before Christmas in the principal streets of Mexico arches are erected from sidewalk to sidewalk, festooned with wreaths of flowers and bunting in the national colors—red, white and green. Under the arches booths are erected, and every toy manufactured in Mexico is on sale.

In every Mexican house great preparations are made for what is called the "pinata." Every child begs and scrapes and saves the centavos for weeks and months ahead. All kinds of articles are made especially for this ceremony, and every family vies with its friends and neighbors to have its pinata more beautiful and fanciful than any one else's.

The pinata is really an earthenware utensil which is in general use for cooking. It is called in common parlance an olla and is of brown pottery something like the old fashioned earthenware crocks used in the north before enamel ware became the fad.

The pinatas are large or small, as the gurse of the purchaser permits. They are round, pot bellied and very large at the top. They are sold from door to door on the streets and in the markets. They cost only 10, 15 or 20 centavos, but the olla is the least expensive part of the game.

The body of the olla for a woman is covered with tissue paper; then a crinkled paper dress is fashioned; then a bodice is built up draped to represent a loose white waist, and above this is placed a false face. The hair is made with black paper, braided into one long plait at the back, as the women wear their hair in Mexico. Sometimes a white tehuana headdress is made of the lace paper used by bakers and confectioners.

A flower pinata is decorated with large paper flowers in every color of the rainbow. Red, white and green ribbons, forming long streamers, and silver and gold tinsel, glass balls and colored lights all help to make the flower pinata very beautiful. The possibilities for dressing these pinatas are endless. In a large family the mother and daughters have their own pinatas, and great secrecy is maintained in the decoration of the olla. It is the aim of each to devise an original a dressing for the pinata as possible, and it can be made a very extravagant ornament. In the families of wealthy Mexicans the luxury of the pinata often mounts into thousands.

After the olla is decorated to the taste it is filled. The filling consists of peanuts, hazel nuts, hard candies, like marbles, and all kinds of Mexican dulces. These dulces are candied fruits, nut paste, etc.

Christmas night the pinatas are carried in great state into the sala and suspended from the ceiling one at a time. All the relatives of the family are present, and as cousins of the fifth and sixth degree are recognized and children are very numerous there is generally a large gathering. They all sit very demurely on chairs ranged in a row around the walls of the room.

One person is constituted master of ceremonies, the eldest son or daughter of the house. He or she stands in the middle of the room. Near by is a jar or umbrella stand filled with apisaco canes or sticks. When everything is ready a child or grown person is selected and called by name. She comes forward and is blindfolded.

Then the fun begins. The person blindfolded is turned round and round until she loses all knowledge of where the pinata hangs. A cane is put in her hands, and she is told to hit the pinata and try to break it. She is given three chances. If she fails to hit it she sits down amid laughter and ridicule. If she hits it without breaking it she is entitled to a small prize.

And so it goes on, one after another being called up, blindfolded and given a cane and three chances to break the pinata. Finally one more fortunate than the rest succeeds in giving a hard enough blow, and, crash, the pinata falls to the grounds in hundreds of bits, and its contents are scattered far and wide.

A wild scramble ensues. Everybody rushes forward to gather as much of the spilled contents as possible.

The fortunate breaker of the pinata gets a handsome prize and is awarded the seat of honor. He or she sits down and is debarrred from another trial at breaking another pinata. As soon as the confusion dies down and order is somewhat restored another olla is hung up and the same routine gone through. So the fun continues until the last pinata is broken, and then the prizes are awarded.

The pinata party is the great social and fun making feature of the Christmas season. After the pinatas have been broken and a supper has been served there follows dancing, or a traveling company of Indians from the mountains is brought in to sing and dance in native costume.

These traveling Indians are somewhat like the singing bands which go around at Christmas time from house to house in England, Germany, France and Italy. They have been known and popular in Mexico from time immemo-

rial. They are much in demand during the Christmas holiday season.—Kansas City Star.

CIRCUS PERFORMERS.

So Them the Circus is a Very Serious Affair.

To circus people the circus is a very serious thing. When a bareback rider slips to the ground after a somersault or a lofty tumbler misses the shoulder it is his business to land on the audience in all sympathy, as if feeling itself how it is to fall before so many people. Very little the performer cares for all the vast multitude. His mind is on the superintendent, his particular superintendent, who is watching him at the side of the arena, and who, when he goes off, is sure to ask very pointedly how his eye happened to be inaccurate or his muscles infirm. There is no place in the circus for performers who fall.

Even the clowns look a little bit serious behind the scenes. But perhaps that is only because the black lines they paint on their whitened visages are always so grim and solemn. And what a wilderness of fun making people there are in the latter day circus—the Bumpkin, the Loon, the Harlequin, the Grimacer, the Merry Andrew, the Austrian Looby, the Zany, the Pierrot, the Punch, the Motley Fool and finally the German Broad Face, whose name is Paddy Burke! One of the clowns was sitting on his trunk in the dressing room licking a stick of black paint and rubbing it on his cheeks so as to make a most funereal expression. The small boy asked him what kind of a clown he was. He said that he was just "Funny Friskky," and he got his visiting card out of his trunk. It read, "H. Friskey, Clown and Comedian," and it had a heavy gold rim, which made it very imposing. In the four corners it said Europe and Asia and Africa and America, which showed that H. Friskey's fame had reached the four corners of the card. Until you saw his merry capers in the ring you never could believe that a man with such a serious face and such an imposing visiting card could be either funny or frisky.—Metropolitan Magazine.

TRUTH OR PARADOX?

Life levels all men; death reveals the eminent.

Liberty means responsibility. That is why most men dread it.

While we have prisons it matters little which of us occupy the cells.

Titles distinguish the mediocre, embarrass the superior and are disgraced by the inferior.

Democracy substitutes election by the incompetent many for appointment by the corrupt few.

Do not do unto others as you would that they should do unto you. Their tastes may not be the same.

Your word can never be as good as your bond, because your memory can never be as trustworthy as your honor.

If you strike a child take care that you strike it in anger, even at the risk of maiming it for life. A blow in cold blood neither can nor should be forgiven.—From George Bernard Shaw's "Man and Superman."

Puzzled by the Law.

The librarian of the Congressional library tells a story of a colored man who came into the library and asked one of the assistants for a "good law book." He explained that one of his neighbors intended to sue him and he wanted to get a book so he could find out the law.

The clerk gave him a copy of a book called "Every Man His Own Lawyer." The colored man sat down at one of the desks and turned the pages of the book for an hour. Then he came to the desk of the assistant and said:

"Deed, boss, cain't you git me sump-in' easier? Dis yere is d' fifth edition. Cain't I have de fast edition? Mebbe I c'd understan' dat. I ain't bin git-tin' on right smart with dis yere fifth one."—Baltimore News.

The Tools of Genies.

Some of the greatest discoveries in physics and chemistry have been made with the simplest forms of apparatus and under the most modest conditions of laboratory equipment. One need only recall the achievements of the famous John Dalton and in later time of Sir Gabriel Stokes to illustrate the point. As regards the latter, a comment of Lord Rayleigh is of interest. Stokes' experimental work, he says, was executed with the most modest appliances. Many of his discoveries were made in a narrow passage behind the pantry of his house, into the window of which he had a shutter fixed with a slit in it and a bracket on which to place crystals and prisms.—London Telegraph.

A False Report.

"I have been told," said Mrs. Oldcastle, "that your daughter has been doing some wonderful things in pyrography."

"Oh, no," replied her hostess, "she ain't been there at all. The last letter we had from her she was in Pittsburg and thought she'd go right through to Washington."—Chicago Record-Herald.

Both Could Do.

Mrs. Truit—My husband is a sort of jack of all trades; he can do almost anything. Mrs. Gayboy—And mine is a sort of jack of clubs; he belongs to fifteen different societies and can do almost anybody!—Detroit Free Press.

Cause and Effect.

Mifkina—Wasn't Benedict's death rather sudden and unexpected? Bifkina—Well, it was sudden, but not necessarily unexpected. His wife had just graduated from a cooking school.

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SITUATION WANTED BY LADY who will invest some money in the business if satisfactory. Address N. E., Astorian.	NOTICE FOR BIDS—ASTORIA, OR. Feb. 19th, 1906.—Bids will be received until 12 o'clock m. on Feb. 29th for the construction of a two-story frame building; plans and specifications for which can be seen at my office No. 323 Commercial street. The right is reserved to reject any or all bids. T. L. BALL.
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